



Automation was extended to calculation of property tax refunds, senior exemptions in cooperative apartments and maintenance of historic property, non-profit and current use exemptions. A new database for taxing district data was created. Applications were developed to further automate and document Levy Limit Worksheet production and levy rate calculation. All these areas still are dependent on mainframe data and programs, but are now able to use modern personal computer tools with downloaded and uploaded mainframe data.

An additional staff person was hired to research and troubleshoot taxpayer problems with appealed values.

A REPORT ON PROGRESS

The department continued to focus on ways to enhance productivity through new and updated technology systems and software. It also improved customer service and the public's access to information. Efforts are ongoing to ensure uniformity, reliability and correct assessment levels.

Improved Customer Service and Information Access

Conversion of assessor's maps to digital form is complete. Quality review and correction of the digitized product is expected to be finished by early fourth quarter of 1999. At that time, assessor staff will maintain only electronic versions of maps. The original mylar assessor maps will be archived. In the meantime, digital maps have been usable by department staff for planning and mass appraisal work throughout the 1999 revaluation.



For the first time, this annual report will be available on the Internet from the Assessor's web site (<http://www.metrokc.gov/assessor/>)



Implementing Technology Enhancements

The Information Services Division implemented new computer systems for managing condominium appraisals. This was the last of the major real property appraisal systems dating from the early 1970s to be redeveloped and moved to the department's client/server database. Major upgrades to personal property systems also are underway.

In addition, the division developed software for scanning photos and drawings in residential folios so that folios can be archived. Software also was developed for digital cameras. If a pilot project this fall is successful, residential appraisers will transition to digital cameras next year.

Other projects were undertaken to upgrade server hardware and database software, to get recorded sales directly from the Records Division database, to track property reviews and to improve the tracking of maintenance.

The Information Services Division also worked on electronic data exchange with King County cities. This effort will continue next year.

Streamlining Assessment Processes

The Commercial/Business Division automated appeal response forms this year. The newly developed program automatically loads characteristics from the department's database for the subject and comparable properties. It has allowed our division to expedite taxpayer appeals.

Enhancements to the real property application used by our division have included successful implementation of the Marshall Swift cost program. The program now automatically takes characteristics from our database and applies a Marshall Swift Cost Approach without individual appraisers doing each calculation. This has saved a significant amount of time in supporting the cost approach to value.





The real property application also has been expanded to include a public information application to better respond to public inquiries. The system shows the various approaches to value calculated for each property and which approach was actually selected by the individual appraiser.

Several appraisal tools have been added in this year. These include the ability to better track new construction and remodel permits, sales information and an improved spreadsheet program to allow appraisers to post selected values.



In the Personal Property assessment area, work has begun on an improved application to better retain and value personal property in King County. The department hopes to have this application tested and implemented for the 2000 assessment cycle.

The division continues to train appraisers in the use and understanding of USPAP and its application to mass appraisal; as well as the various statistical measures to assure uniformity, reliability and correct assessment levels.

The Residential Division continued to work toward improved applications, knowledge and training.



This division also implemented a new, streamlined appeals application providing appraisers with better sales search and property characteristic information than previously available. This improved information allows appraisers to quickly identify and address taxpayer concerns.

A Characteristic Based Market Adjustment methodology was implemented allowing individual characteristics to be more closely reviewed as part of the annual updating process.



Along with assisting property owners to better understand the valuation process, training for staff in valuation model building, NCSS, Access, Word, USPAP, and GIS continues as a high priority within the Residential Division.